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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the nature of change in educational institutions using a number of sociological variables including: (1) the internal and external environment; (2) organizational goals; (3) hierarchy of authority and power; and (4) professional standards. Each of these factors is discussed and related to one another in order to demonstrate why it is so difficult to change schools. Relevant research in the fields of educational and organizational change is incorporated into the discussion. (Author/APM)

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The Undermining of Change In Educational Institutions: An Organizational Analysis

by Robert Cronberg, Jr.

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The Undermining of Change In Educational Institutions: An Organizational Analysis

The role of the change agent in education has seemingly been made easier to comprehend in the past few years. With the great amount of criticism and concern that has developed against various educational institutions, one would think that any new program would be relatively easy to implement. This, unfortunately, has not been the case, and I'm sure the average change agent has lost sleep trying to figure out why this has turned out to be such a big dilemma. In addition, questions of suitability in implementing programs seem to be equally as perplexing. To solve all of this, many of the new educational revolutionaires have written very eloquent, poetic, and sometimes, romantic works providing the "answers" to these questions. Their viewpoints are "global" ones in the sense that, supposedly, anyone anywhere can implement change providing he or she follows the given formula. As a result most have failed, and, at best, others have created much confusion. It is for this reason that I have chosen not to follow in their footsteps. Instead, I will attempt, in this analysis, to utilize certain variables from a sociological perspective, which begins to ask different questions concerning the nature of change in educational institutions. Among these variables include: the internal and external environment, organizational goals, hierarchy of authority and power, and professional standards. Each of these will be

discussed and related to one another in such a way as to begin understanding the difficulty in changing an organization that truly pervades every facet of American Society.

In this analysis, one of the most important aspects of a school's climate is it's external environment. In looking at schools, it is perhaps best to consider them as open-systems. whereby they interact with the community, school board, and other schools, etc. Furthermore, there is a constant need to view and monitor these external sources. In part, they can be a source of change for they can control the school's legitimacy, aid in securing capital, and resources. In terms of this legitimacy would be built into the school. It is a needed commodity. Schools, in a great sense, produce something that somebody else wants. That something is education and the purchase itself constitutes legitimacy. However, as one takes a deeper look, it becomes apparent that it is not quite so simple. For example, one can look at a school that has recently made the transition from a traditional to open class structure. The school's legitimacy can come under attack from the community, teachers within the school, various local organizations such as the PTA and the students themselves. In universities, a similar pattern can be discerned. Charles Perrow states:

> "A few years ago, large prestigious universities had not yet experienced crises of legitimacy. Today, most of them are attacked, on the one hand, by radical student who deny the legitimacy of the university as it is now constituted, and, on the other hand, by conservative legislators and voters who deny the legitimacy of those segments of university operation which seem to provide a haven for radical ideologies."[1]

Another problem that enters into this picture, especially in light of criticisms waged against existing schools, is that

of the shifting grounds of this legitimacy. With the many new programs, methods, and techniques being developed, schools may find that while they are persuing one program, the community, PTA, etc. is being educated to at least consider another totally different program. This shift may cause immense confusion within the school. Indeed, it could create such a disequilibrium that the whole structure could change unless school officials are prepared to justify their operations. In order to do this, schools may need to procure help and support. This may take the form of co-opting the threatening elements in the environment to help resolve the crises. Other ways of dealing with the environment: bargaining or compromise, and forming coalitions in which the school may join forces with another organization favorable to it's position. These will be discussed later in connection with organizational goals.

Other variables in the environment, however, need to be brought in at this point. Perhaps the most important of these, that leads to some type of instability in the school; is the general growth in knowledge. This affects not only the community and school board, but the teachers as well. In terms of the community, there is some evidence that supports the hypothesis that as people become more educated to accept change, implementing new programs will not be as difficult, for the change agent. In a study done by the Research Division of the Institute for Development of Educational Activities (IDEA), the community and it's acceptance of change was one of the most important variables. The study states: "In these schools where change did take place, the community was open, willing, and eager to accept the changes."[2]

An often neglected aspect of this growth in knowledge is the affect it will have upon teachers in general and prospective teachers in particular. There seems to be a shifting, emphasis either on teaching skills and facts or more theoretical teaching programs which deal with the affective sides of learning. In addition, this shift sometimes takes the form of various confluent approaches in which the utilization of both methods becomes the desirable end. Teachers, as well as propsective teachers, must therefore, keep up to date with these trends so that they are prepared to deal with them as the environment shifts in direction. This, however, presents additional problems as teachers often find a security in a certain way of doing things. They are not as flexible as one might assume in this respect. A natural response to such a threatening situation is to postpone action in the hopes that the crisis will die off. The change agent must, therefore, be able to deal effectively with this variable in planning a program change.

Another related environmental variable is that of complexity. It is an internal variable that refers to the level of knowledge and expertise in an organization. Hage and Aiken state that: "There are two complementary aspects of complexity: the number of occupational specialties in an organization and the degree of professionalism of each."[3] As we discuss the growth of knowledge in this organization, we cannot neglect the importance of professionalism and the role it plays in terms of change. To begin with, it is often assumed that school teachers are professionals. This, to a large degree, may be true in the case of college and university teaching, however, if we look at

certain "ideal" characteristics that professionals seemingly possess we can begin to see where it might not apply to, let's say, an elementary school setting:

1) High Income
2) High Prestige
3) Standardized Credentials - A lengthy amount of training
4) Esoteric knowledge
5) Professional Organizations outside the profession
6) Self-Regulation - code of ethics
7) Service Oriented
8) Characterized by mystique

Again one must bear in mind that this is an ideal type and as such it reflects the extreme characteristics of professionalism. Even so, it is useful in understanding how the degree of professionalism might every well shift as one goes up the educational continuum. Within the elementary school, it might very well be that teachers have not developed the necessary expertise to keep up with current educational developments. Indeed, Hage and Aiken suggest that:

> "An organization that has many varieties of professionally trained persons is likely, therefore, to bear witness continually to these internal pressures (the acquisition of knowledge leads to the recognition of how little we really know about the world of our specialization) toward change."[4]

If what Hage and Aiken imply is true, then the development of professionalism, or lack of it in this case, could have a direct effect upon the implementation of any change. The second part of complexity, the sheer number of specialties within the school could also have a direct effect upon the rate of change in existing educational institutions. It would seem that the more different and varied the perspectives of each specialty within the school, the more likelihood there is that pressure and competition will be waged to implement new programs.

This, however, may not be true in all cases. In some situations, it may very well be that the increased pressure, by different sub-units within the school, will lead to a conflict that would put the institution in an unescapable state of confusion. This is a possibility rarely dealt with in much of the literature concerning changes in education. However, it should also be considered important in understanding the importance of professional specialties within an educational setting.

There are also other environmental variables to be taken into consideration. These are formalization and stratification. Formalization refers to the number of rules specifying what is to be done. Stratification refer to the distribution of rewards to different jobs in the organization. These rewards can take the form whether in money or prestige. It becomes apparent, after a while, that both of these related together produce another barrier to change. Namely that a high degree of stratification and formalization (difference between the top and the bottom and the difficulty in moving up) may result in a discouragement of upward communication and thus may set limits on the development and consideration of new ideas. As a hypothesis, it is useful in formulating a certain perspective of different barriers, but it is not a truism. Different social-psychological variables that could be applied might show that attitudinal factors, concerning the lower-participants (teachers) held by the administrative staff are more crucial in determining eventual acceptance of communication and ideas.

The next related variable that is included in this analysis is important in determining the priorities of any given school. Organizational goals are good indicators of what an organization is attempting to accomplish. More specifically, educational institutions are designed to do something, namely to transfer the cultural heritage from generation to generation. This we could call an official goal for it reflects the stated general purposes of any given school. Many have argued that goal-approach, such as this, to understanding organizational behavior and effectiveness is inadequate. This, they say, is because the official goals of an organization do not tell you enough, if anything, of the day to day operation of conscious decision-making with certain objectives in mind. In this analysis, we shall consider a systems approach which will look at the environment of the organization in terms of resource procurement and the ability to exploit these resources. As such, the systems-approach would analyze the operative goals of an organization. These operative goals designate the ends and thus reflect what decisions are being made in terms of the actual priorities. In addition, these goals serve as sources of legitimation which justify the organization's activities.

In any given educational setting, it would be useful to take three factors into consideration when looking for the operative goals.

1) The allocations of resources throughout the organization. This we can call optimum distribution.

2) Reviewing the budget

3) Reviewing personnel records to see the reasons why certain people are hired and fired.

Keeping these factors in mind, we can employ Perrow's five categories of goals as one basis for our analysis.

1) Societal Goals are designed for society in general. This category deals (in terms of education) with maintaining cultural values.

2) Output Goals - this category refers to the consumer towards which a product is directed. In this case the consumer would be the community and the product is education.

3) System Goals - this deals with the internal functioning of the organization. In terms of a school, this would refer to its stability and modes of funtioning.

4) Product Goals - this refers to the goals regarding characteristics of the product. Such characteristics as quality and quantity, variety, styling, availability, or innovativeness of the product (education) enter into the picture.

5) Derived Goals - This final category views the political aims, community services (such as night school and various programs).

Taking the three factors plus Perrow's multifunctional goal categories, we can additionally utilize Thompson and McEwen's goal setting model to view how a school might or might not change.

One of the first observations that becomes apparent in the analysis of a given school is that it must adapt to the environment in which it functions. Parsons has labeled this the adaptive Phase. Perrow's Multifunctional Goals are reflective of a systems approach as they view the internal and external conditions of the organization's environment. In the proposed model (see attached page) we notice that these goals may determine or affect the optimum distribution, the budget allocations, and the personnel within the school. Bear in mind that this model assumes that those most powerful variables, in terms of affecting change, are those which originate from inter-

actions with the environment. In support of this hypothesis, it is perhaps useful to draw on Etzioni's Two Approaches to Organizational Analysis. In it he states that "...the organization's orientation to the elements it tries to change is also highly influenced by their existing nature. In short, a study of the effectiveness has to include an analysis of the environmental conditions and the organization's orientation to them."[5] This implies that some type of environmental interaction must take place. It is my contention that the form or manner in which a school interacts with its environment may influence or determine the goals of the institution which may thus result in a change. The form or manner of interactions refers to Thompson's and McEwen's Goal Setting Strategies. Briefly they are:

1) Competition - Refers to a form of rivalry between two or more organizations (schools).

2) Bargaining - Refers to the negotiation of some type of agreement for the exchange of goods and services between two or more organizations.

3) Co-operation - A process of bringing in the threatening elements from the environment. This is used to insure a constant stability.

4) Coalition - A combination of two or more organizations for a common purpose.

Thompson and McEwen state that:

> "Coalition, and the fact that it does represent a sharing or invasion of goal setting power, is reflected in some of the bitter resistance to consolidation in tradition-oriented localities."[6]

Indeed, this resistance to change or goal displacement, as it sometimes seems in education institutions, may be characteristic of bureaucratic profession as a whole. In which case, it would seem that environmental factors are playing a larger

role in the conditioning process than ever before. This barrier to change, however, is another variable that is somewhat beyond the scope of this particular analysis. We can, however, utilize a model done by Seashore and Yachtman that substantially correlates with the discussion thus far. Basically, it incorporates a systems-approach for measuring effectiveness. Firstly, the interaction of an organization with it's environment leads to, secondly, the ability to exploit that environment through exchange and bargaining. This, as is perhaps obvious, fits into the model presented here. It recognizes the importance of the interaction, as well as, the form or manner in which this interaction takes place.

Another approach to goals and their identification within the overall environment comes from Price (1972). It seems as though he has utilized both the goal approach and the systems approach in his two components of the goal approach. These are the (1) prescribed goal approach and (2) derived goal approach. Briefly, the prescribed goal approach refers to a focus on the "formal charter" of an organization. Price recognizes where this approach has failed in providing a reationale for the empirical testing of goals in general. However, his utilization of another approach, the derived goal approach, seems to correlate with Etzioni's useage of the systems approach. The derived approach uses society as its basis of examination (ie. The more an organization benefits society, the greater is its effectiveness). Society, as a general term, could refer just as adequately for our purposes to the organization's environment, which brings us back to the central question of this particular

analysis: How and in what ways do goal structures tell us something about the way an educational institution functions, changes, and resists change?

To view and relate the discussion we have noted the difference between operative goals and official goals. Since official goals have not been viewed as good indicators of the true organizational policy, the change agent looking at a particular school must hunt and look for those goals that are truly reflective of the school's character (see Perrow goals). These goals, in part, can be found by looking at three factors.

1) The optimum distribution of resources within the school.

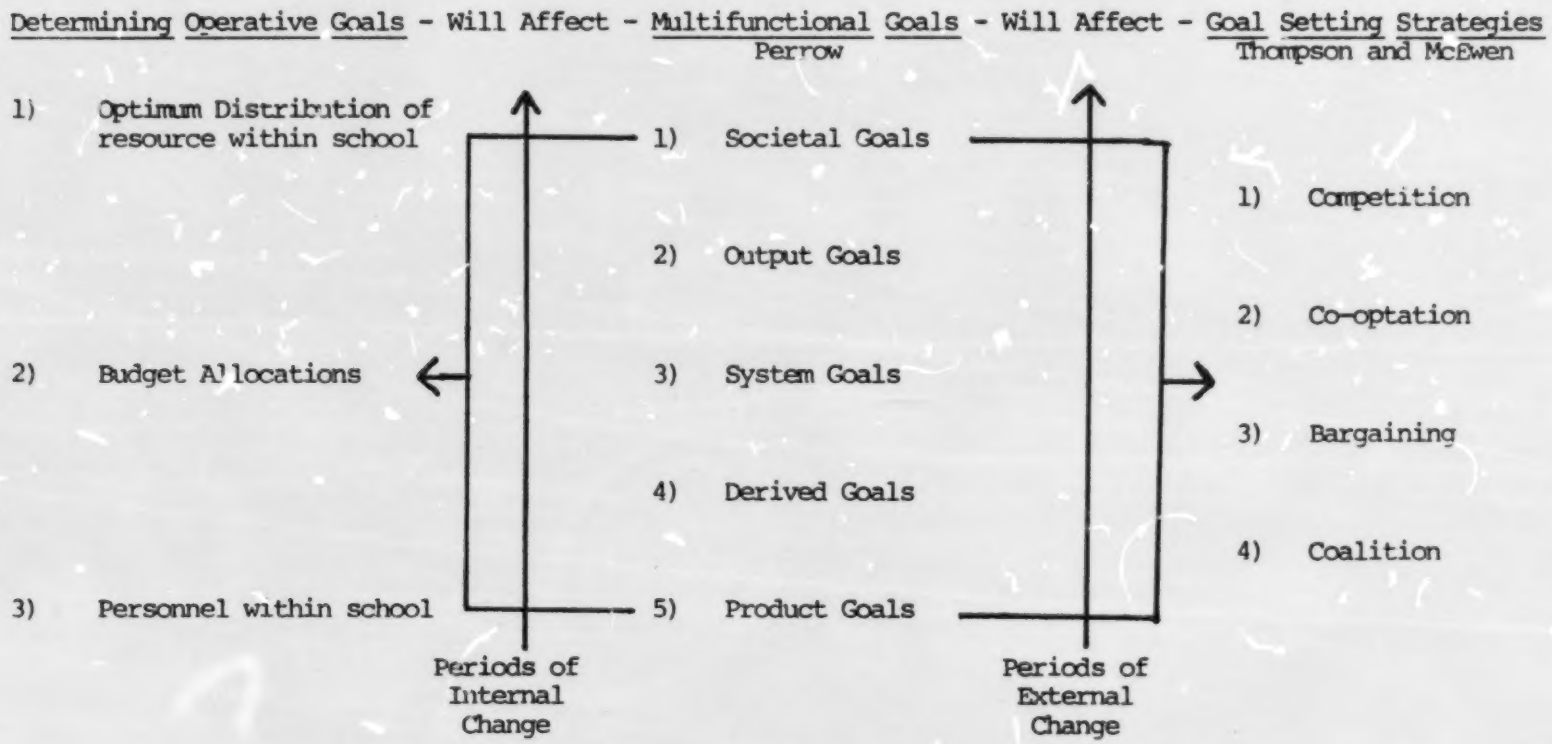
2) Budget allocations with the school.

3) Reviewing the personnel of the school.

After accomplishing this, the change agent could, as I suggested, move outside the internal environment, to use certain goal-setting strategies pinpointed at the operative goals of the school. The strategies can, from the model, by systematically pulled out and considered. Competition, for example, between two schools could take the form of demanding additional funds. In order to prove to the organization allocating the additional funds that they are more worthy, one school may for a period of time change its product goal. With the emphasis perhpas going more towards a quality oriented education, it could, indeed, receive the funds it was competing for. Another example of a goal-setting strategy affecting the operative goals of a school can be seen in bargaining. If the community, let's say, demands that a school hire a number of black teachers, the school may very well comply, a

Effect of Environmental Interaction

Upon Operative Goal Change



minor goal loss, in order to achieve or preserve a major goal (stability). One can readily see the significant relationships inherent in these strategies and goals throughtout the model. These strategies, as we have seen, determined by an interaction with the external environment. In support of this hypothesis, I have drawn on the works of Seashore and Yachtman, Price, and Etzioni. It is important however to emphasize again that this hypothesis is no guarantee for success in the implementation of change in an educational institution. There are many other factors to be taken into account here. Among these include: The bureaucratic structure and its effects upon the personality of the official or administrator, goal displacement, goal succession and in depth discussion of effectiveness. At any rate, I think we can begin to see just how inter-related these variables really are. They affect one another and as such can be a great stimulus for change. There is another variable, however, that we can also analyze to get a clearer picture of this change process.

Hierarchy of authority and power go hand in hand in the analysis of an educational institution. They, in large part, determine the structure of the institution, and, as such, might be another source for change. Keeping in harmony with our previous discussions of the internal-external environment and goals, we shall begin this particular analysis from the standpoint of an entire school system or district. In many, the structure is as follows:

1) Board of Education
2) Superintendent
3) Administrative bureaucracy
4) School principales
5) Teacher organizations - NEA, Aft-union
6) Independent organizations

This hierarchal pattern can, in certain instances, include other power-holders such as: business, labor groups, civic organizations, parent organizations, neighborhood groups and the public at large. However, these are usually less visible than the major ones mentioned above. In looking at the six categories of an average bureaucratic shcool system, we can probably see many areas where conflict might arise. Firstly, it is not always so clear whether the Board of Education or the superintendent holds the greater amount of power. Since the superintendent often times is elected by the school board, he might seem likely to play a submissive role in deciding policy. However, in many cases, since he mainly controls information and it's flow down to the Board, the superintendent can have a tremendous amount of power even without the Board knowing it. In addition, the superintendent may have much power over the individual schools in the system. Since a school's financial situation is largely determined by taxes paid to the state, which in turn allocates money to the school board, the superintendent can control individual allocations. This, of course, assumes that the superintendent controls the information flow and makes recommendations as to these allocations. These examples of a conflict in power and authority can be seen throughout the six categories. It, however, might be useful at this point to draw back on Hage and Aiken's notion of centralization and relate it with the one example of conflict between the school board and superintendent. They state that: "Centralization refers to the way in which power is distributed in any organization. By power, we mean the capacity of one actor to move another (or other) actors to

action."[7] If we can stretch the usage of the organization to also include the school board and superintendent (since in educational institutions and systems they are a major part of the bureaucratic structure anyway), then we can see that if a change agent somehow gets into the position of superintendent, he could set up a highly centralized office, create power-dependence relationships, and, thus, the possibility of change would not seem so remote. This, however, is stretching many of the variables and may seem in fact Utopian. Furthermore, Hage and Aiken state that:

> "The concretration of power in the hands of a few persons in organization tends to lead to the preservation of the status quo because one aspect of power is the ability to veto ideas for change or otherwise block attempts to introduce change into an organization."[8]

However, if the nature of the bureaucratic structure is such that the status quo has always been preserved, then a change could result simply from the discontinuation of the norm and the implementation of another structure. This would not necessarily have to mean a decentralization in the structure but just the implementation of a new one (perhaps based upon continuous change) to take it's place.

At this point, it might be useful to examine the hierarchy of authority and power from an internal standpoint of a school. In this portion of the analysis, we will utilize the models and theories of French and Raven, Donald Warren and David Mechanic. These will be related to an educational setting in such a ways as to view the different power and dependence relationships that characterize the daily lives of the personnel within the system.

The first typology, French and Raven's, deals with five interpersonal power bases. These are:

1) Reward - If one conforms to gain acceptance.

2) Coercive - This is based on the expectation of some type of punishment for a failure to conform to influence.

3) Legitimate - Norms or values of a group that individuals accept because of their socialization into the group.

4) Referent - This refers to a willingness to identify with an occupational role or person within the occupation.

5) Expert - This is derived from the extent of knowledge or perceived knowledge possessed by a group or individual within the organization.

It is important to arrive at some understanding of what dependency is as French and Raven introduce the five power bases with the consideration of the "level of observability" with the degree of dependency involved. For the sake of this discussion, we can say that dependency refers to the degree to which a person (teacher) has internalized certain norms within the organization. Visibility refers to just how visible the overt behavior of the person (teacher) is to the other members of the organization (school).

At this point, we can introduce Donald Warren's study of Conformity of Elementary School Teachers. In it, he utilizes the French and Raven power basis to consider the structure of the power that is exercised. In addition, he adds two dimensions: 1) the amount of control, 2) the way control is supported to measure both attitudinal (both beliefs and values as they relate to overt behavior) and behavioral (compliance in overt behavior without any interalization of norms) conformity.

In the discussion of his findings, we will look at

several implications this has for changing the internal structure of a school.

The first finding was that high visibility (high overt behavior) and behavorial conformity (with little or no internalization of norms) were related to a coercive power setting. In the context of an educational institution, this implies that, for example. the principal will most likely get a behavioral compliance but only through some type of surveillance method so that he can keep everyone in line. This would, it seems, be a good time for the change agent to start mobilizing forces within the school. If the surveillance cannot be maintained, this form of holding power could thus become ineffective. The second finding was that reward power was marked by high visibility and behavioral conformity. Even though job satisfaction may be high, as well as, commitment and dedication, the internalization of norms seems to be absent. This may be likely to happen in many schools where a teacher will only comply with the principal. So that he can gain acceptance rather than rejection. Again, it seems likely that this type of power will only be effective as long as the teacher is monitored. The third finding was that expert power was highly related to attitudinal conformity and low visibility. This seems to highly correlate with the earlier discussion of professionalism. If the school consists of a highly professionalized staff there could be a great deal of conformity (attitudinal) because of an attachment to knowledge (esoteric) and a developed expertise. We could hypothesize that there is probably much more upward communication with this type of influence. In addition, this school might

be viewed as quite dynamic. Hage and Aiken state that because of the growth in knowledge "...new programs in the organization require new types of professions or technically trained experts, who, in turn, feed new ideas and new demands for still other new programs..."[9] This type of continuous program change may indeed characterize those schools that employ expert types of power relationships. The fourth finding was that legitimate power was strongly oriented the attitudinal conformity with either high or low visibility. French and Raven state that this power "stems from internalized values which dictate that there is a legitimate right to influence and an obligation to accept this influence."[10] Thus the relationship is based upon the position of, let's say, the principal rather than his personal attributes and characteristics. The change agent in this area may find that he will have to deal with the structure of certain social positions within the school rather than with the people themselves. The fifth and final finding in this study was that of referent power was characterized by both attitudinal and behavioral conformity with low visibility. Because it could go either way, the change agent may have to determine whether the type of conformity present is attitudinal or behavioral. We could suppose, however, that the more professional a school is the more the tendency would be towards attitudinal conformity.

The next model, that of David Mechanic, deals with the power of lower participants. In it, he outlines six power-dependence relationships. These are:

1) Control access to information
2) Effort and interest
3) Attractiveness
4) Location and position in physical space

5) Coalitions
6) The following of the Rules which does tend to have a disrupting effect because rules are never followed.

In an educational bureaucracy, these six relationships are often in a state of flux and change. I have hinted at several of these throughout this organizational analysis. I mentioned how the superintendent, by controlling the information flow, could, in fact, have complete power over an educational system. Equally as feasible, in terms of the internal structure, is the type of power a particular sub-unit (department chairman) could have over an entire school. For example, if the head was conducting an experimental human relations program without the principal's knowledge of it, the principal could be in danger of losing his job, if the community, school board, etc. deemed it inappropriate. In addition, forming coalitions, as I have mentioned, are extremely important ways of achieving power. If you can mobilize certain people within a school or even if you just know who the power-holders are you have increased your own power somewhat. Then, by utilizing different strategies (internal and external) perhaps dealing with the goal structures, you might be able to create a power-dependence relationship within the school. This might or might not become useful in implementing change as there are many other factors to consider. One factor that is crucial in this analysis is that of maintaining dependence. This was an essential point in Mechanic's power positions, and, without it the power maintenance will become dysfunctional. The way to maintain this power is to maintain people's dependence on you. In sum, what we are dealing with there is that within any given school there is a distinctive structure of power,

whether it be coercive, referent, legitimate, expert, or reward. This power can and is manipulated, blocked, changed, and transformed often. This can be done by using any of the six power-dependence relationships presented by David Mechanic. These are by no means exhaustive. Furthermore, some may not even apply to certain schools. However, these power-dependence strategies can and do give us a good indication of how relationships form, dissolve, merge and dominate certain elements independent of the day to day teaching/learning process.

In this organizational analysis of educational institutions, I have considered four variables, the internal and external environment, organizational goals, authority and power and professional standards. These, I have felt, are reflective of the fact that any analysis of a school or educational institution must involve a discussion of different megaproblems that affect it's functioning and direction. Nevertheless, there are certain limitations in this analysis that need to be brought out at this point. There are many other variables which enter into the picture, and more importantly, they are equally as crucial to the analysis of any educational institution. Among these are: Technology or "The actions that an individual performs upon an object (this also refers to people) with or without the aid of tools or mechanical devices, in order to make some change in that object."[11] Job satisfaction which relates to technology through the degree to which an individual has control over physical movement, pace of work, time control, quantity and quality of work. Control and effectiveness refer to the coordination and distribution of control and it's relationship with the degree to which an organization is achieving it's

goal. Size meaning how and in what ways does the size of the school or a particular sub-unit within the school relate to it's effectiveness as a whole. This also involves much of the power-dependence theory I discussed earlier. Nevertheless, with the variables that I chose, I think we can begin to see a pattern emerging. The internal and external environment is pervasive throughout the analysis. It is an important factor and one that should be considered, not only as a source, but as a means for implementing change as well. I have used it, more or less, as a base for analyzing organizational goals, the authority structure, power and professional standards. Furthermore, I have shown, through the use of several models and typologies that these variables can change, sometimes dramatically, the structure of the educational institution.

Change often stems from the recognition that what is currently being done in the organization fails way short of the things that could be done. If a few members of an educational institution or the change agent in general see that there is a need for some type of planned change within their institution, they had better consider making some type of assessment of the possible consequences for the teacher. These include the structure of the school, programs of re-orientation and re-education and the monitoring of actual consequences. Any attempt at introducing a new program or some type of change and expecting the personnel within the school to "fit right in" are destined to fail. However, if the change represents the cooperative planning of those who will be greatly affected by it, it is conceivable that there will be a greater willingness on their part to see it through. One major problem with the changes that change

agents attempt to impose is that they have not sufficiently monitored and directed the "change's" course. The change has thus become undermined. Perhaps the most crucial period of time for the change process occurs after it has been implemented. The equilibrium has not yet stabilized. Indeed, if the educational institution is dynamic and complex to begin with, this equilibrium may never stabilize. Many educational theorists and some sociologists as well have even gone so far as to say that all organizations are moving towards the dynamic model. If this is the case, then "professional" change agents will no longer have to contend with the frustrations of trying to implement changes that are continually being undermined. In fact, they will most likely be out of a job.

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